Margaret

An Olden Tale

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A. E. E.

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1854.

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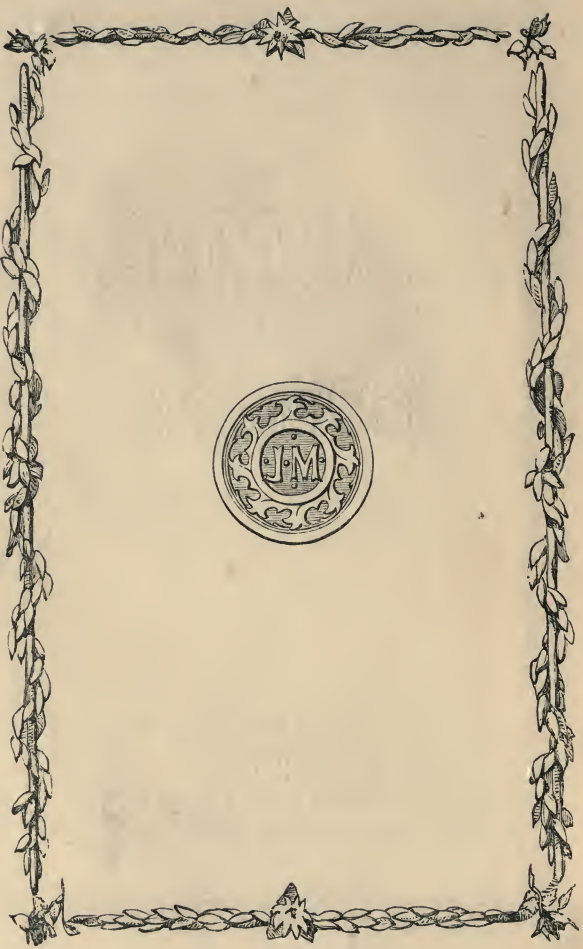
[1850]


J.M

Springtide.

N Antioch's gorgeous city
(An olden tale to tell)
The lovely maiden Margaret
Doth with her father dwell.

All Antioch's faireſt daughters
Are fain to own her queen,
With her dark eyes flaſhing luſtre,
And her free and princely mien.

Not from the pearl-like daiſy,
By the Gauls called Marguerite,
Which ſeems on Earth's green boſom,
Like the print of angels' feet;

Not thence her name was given,
But from Ocean's loveliеſt gem,
That lends its luſtrous beauty
To the Aſiarch's diadem;

For fondly ſaid Evodius,
His little babe ſhould be
A coſtlier pearl than ever
Was cloiſter'd in the ſea,

With all the chiſelled beauty
Of her mother's Grecian race,
And the deeper light of Syrian eyes,
And the queenly Aſian grace.

She is his only daughter,
And he is rich and great,
So many a ſlave he giveth
On Margaret to wait.

No marvel if ſhe bear her
With high imperious ſway,
And frowneth if they haſte not
Her bidding to obey;

And yet, for ſhe is gentle,
And her's is beauty's ſpell,
The youthful lady's handmaids
Have learn'd to love her well.

Full quickly from her chiding
To bounties doth ſhe paſs,
Like an April cloud, whoſe relics
Are the ſtar-flowers in the graſs.

Yet oft, 'mid all the ſplendour
That riches can command,
A mournful mood comes o'er her
That few can underſtand.

"Hath an evil eye looked on her?"
The maidens aſk apart,
And what hath chill'd the bounding
Of that young and joyous heart?

"Nay, but if we were like her,
Right merrily we'd live!
We would not lack a pleaſure
This ſunny world can give!"

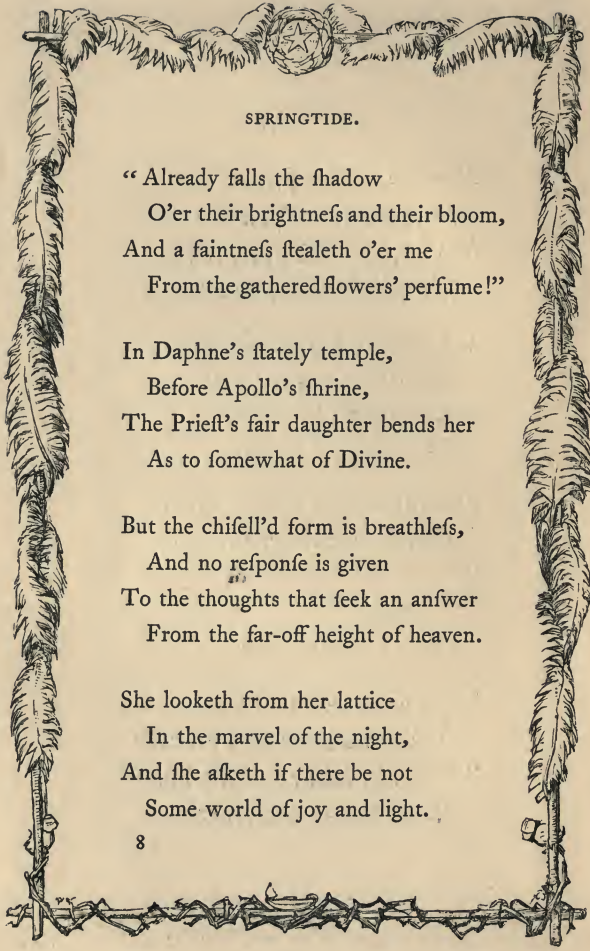
For they know not that their miſtreſs,
With all that gold can buy,
Hath a yearning void within her,
Earth ne'er might ſatisfy.

Anon ſhe wanders lonely
In Daphne's myrtle grove,
And the flow'rets ſmile a welcome
Where'er her footſteps rove.

The birds are ſinging blithely,
The waters laugh in light,
And all around her ſeemeth
To gladneſs to invite.

Yet as though ſhe thought to revel
In wantonneſs of grief,
'Mid Earth's wealth of flowers ſhe ſaddens
O'er a roſe's faded leaf.

She twines a votive garland,
And when the work is wrought,
"Why pluck the flowers to wither?"
She anſwers to her thought.



"Already falls the ſhadow
O'er their brightneſs and their bloom,
And a faintneſs ſtealeth o'er me
From the gathered flowers' perfume!"

In Daphne's ſtately temple,
Before Apollo's ſhrine,
The Prieſt's fair daughter bends her
As to ſomewhat of Divine.

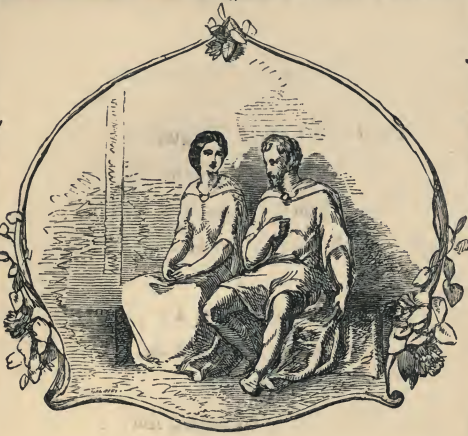
But the chiſell'd form is breathleſs,
And no reſponſe is given
To the thoughts that ſeek an anſwer
From the far-off height of heaven.

She looketh from her lattice
In the marvel of the night,
And ſhe aſketh if there be not
Some world of joy and light.

"A world where flowers are fadeleſs,
And where lov'd ones never die!
And art thou there, my mother?"
She aſketh with a ſigh.

For ſhe thinketh of Ianthe
In her beauty ſnatched away,
When her little one unconſcious,
On another's boſom lay;

And a ſad and ſhrouded phantom
From the mother's marble tomb,
Haunts her daughter's thoughtful
ſpringtide
With its myſtery of gloom.



A Dream of Earth.

ORQUATUS is the Prefect
Whom all the East obey,
For they needs muſt do him honour
Who beareth Cæſar's ſway.

His entrance into Antioch
Is a gay and gallant ſight;
Beſide his chariot rideth
Full many a Roman knight.

But ſooth to ſay, Torquatus
Is the nobleſt of them all,
And the purple-bordered toga
Doth bravely round him fall.

"Long live the brave Torquatus!"
The people ſhout around:
The very air is vocal
With the oft-repeated ſound.

The faireſt maids of Antioch
Their Daphne's treaſures bring,
And many a laurel garland
O'er the youthful Prefect fling;

But the daughter of Evodius
Is the loveliеſt flow'ret there,
With the bloſſom'd myrtle wreathing
Her darkly gleaming hair.

To her cheek the warm blood ruſhes,
The Prefect's glance to meet,
But his high arched brow is fluſhing
At the ſight of Marguerite.

"Now by the gods," he crieth,
"Your Antioch boaſts a pearl
Beyond the wealth of empires,
In yonder dark-hair'd girl!"

Torquatus is a warrior
To whom the battle-field,
With its perilous excitement,
Doth the joy of heroes yield:

But the prancing of the war-horſe,
The flaſhing of the ſword,
On the bold adventurer never
Such a joyous impulſe pour'd.

So from that day he ſeeketh
To win her for his bride,
The dazzling of whoſe brightneſs
Hath curtain'd all beſide.

And a bluſhing girl hath queen'd it
O'er the haughty Roman's heart;
A dove hath cowed the eagle,
Her ſoft eyes ſhot the dart.

The long dark laſhes veil'd them
From the felt but ſhrouded gaze,
In new-born reverence ſhrinking
From ſuch beauty in amaze.

In love's enchanted midnight,
Torquatus ſees his ſtar,
Like a glory far above him,
And a myſtery afar.

She paſſeth, but her viſion
With the Prefect lingers ſtill,
And her fairy footſtep's ſounding
His inmoſt heart can thrill.

He loves, and is beloved—
To Margaret he ſeems
Apollo's breathing likeneſs,
The ideal of her dreams.

Evodius marks with gladneſs
The progreſs of their love;
Invoking oft to bleſs them
The powers that rule above.

He dreams how Aſia's circlet
Will beſeem the queenly brow
Of his young and beauteous daughter,
So like Ianthe now!

It is the olden ſtory—
A ſigh for faded flowers!
But ſummer's glory falleth
On freſhly blooming bowers;

And the memory of Ianthe,
In death's ſilence ſhrouded long,
Is a tale that erſt could charm him,
And an old remember'd ſong.

But Evodius for the *living*
His prieſtly worſhip pays,
And on Apollo's altar
His votive offering lays;

What time in Daphne wandering,
The youth and maiden find
Love's ſweet enchanted fables
With all they ſee entwined.

Love prompts to noble daring;
Love rears the laurel tree,
And the victor finds a chaplet,
Though his Daphne ſeem to flee.

"Thou wilt not flee, my Margaret;"
Torquatus whiſpers now,
"But wilt thou bind the garland
To grace thy lover's brow?"

And the maiden's only anſwer
Is a joy-illumin'd ſmile,
Nor dreams ſhe of the ſhadow,
That haunted her erewhile;

Oh, call her not forgetful!
In thoſe ſoftly gleaming eyes
The truthful truſt that linketh
The paſt and future, lies;

For the change hath paſs'd upon her
Of a maiden's firſt fond love,
When it ſeems as though the graces
A veil for beauty wove.

By the fringèd eyelids drooping,
By the ſoft cheeks' pearly bluſh,
By the voice whoſe liquid ſweetneſs
Seems but deepening in its huſh.

Such change hath come upon her,
As o'er Ianthe came,
When Evodius learn'd to call her
By his own betroth'd one's name.

The workday world around her
A roſeate glow hath caught,
And all ſweet ſounds are vocal
To her own unutter'd thought.

The maidens at her toilet
Are free to uſe their ſkill,
Nor chides ſhe now an effort
To make her lovelier ſtill.

Say not ſuch weakneſs marketh
A woman's trivial mind:
'Tis the woman's heart that prompteth
A joy for love to find.

The Pearl of Price.

WITH pearls, the lady's nameſakes,
They deck her raven hair,
While they whiſper that their miſtreſs
Is herſelf a pearl more rare.

But a matron ſtands beſide her
With a face like moonlight pale,
When the pitying ſkies ſeem lending
This weary world a veil;

And ſhe ſpeaks not when they urge her
The lady's charms to own,
For ſhe ſtriveth with a ſorrow
That feareth to be known.

She is Margaret's foſter-mother,
And Margaret loves her well,
Though a myſtery is around her
That baffles all to ſpell.

'Tis whiſper'd that Salome
In ſecret bends her knee,
The Chriſtians' God to worſhip,
Who died upon the tree.

But now the maidens ſpare not
Her thoughtful mood to chide,
As ominous of evil,
Their miſtreſs to betide.

"Peace, ſlaves!" ſaith Lady Margaret,
"Refrain your froward tongue,
Nor think ye in my hearing
My faithful nurſe to wrong!

"But tell me now, Salome,
For I know thy love ſincere,
What augury of ſadneſs
Was mother to thy tear?

"For I felt it fall upon me,
In the ſilence of thy thought,
And I marvell'd at the token,
And the meſſage that it brought.

"Why art thou ſlow to anſwer?
Surely thou thinkeſt not
Thy right to warn and counſel
Is by thy child forgot!

"I aſk thee not for flattery;
Thou know'ſt I hold it cheap;
But tell me, now, Salome,
What moveth thee to weep?"

No anſwer from Salome
Save the burſting ſob is heard,
As though a thought within her,
Too deep for utterance, ſtirr'd.

The ſlaves look on in marvel,
Till by a ſign diſmiſs'd,
And fondly Lady Margaret
Salome's brow hath kiſs'd.

"Now ſpeak to me, my mother,
For ſee, we are alone"—
And in fond embrace ſhe mingles
With her nurſe's tears her own.

"O pardon me, ſweet Lady,
The thoughts that o'er me ruſh,
From the depth of love awaking
A fountain's heavenward guſh!

"I need not ſay with others
That thou art paſſing fair;
Thy lover's eyes have told thee—
Thou haſt thine anſwer there.

"But even now, my lov'd one,
While gazing on thy face,
Ianthe ſeemed before me,
In all her youthful grace.

"A Pearl of brighter luſtre
Than I can ſkill to tell,
Was gliſtening on her forehead,
And a glory round her fell.

" And methought ſhe bade me tell thee
To win like glorious dower,
To ſeal thy radiant beauty
For an amaranthine flower."

" What meaneſt thou, Salome?
Lies not my mother low,
Where the waters of Orontes
Through the vale of Daphne flow?"

" There like a broken lily,
Her mortal form was laid,
To ſlumber for a ſeaſon
In ſilence and in ſhade.

" But the buried root upſendeth
Another flower, my child,
And a bleſſed ſpringtide waketh
The fair one undefil'd!

" For a Sign was ſigned upon her,
Whoſe virtue cannot fail,
And that Sign upon thy forehead
Ianthe yearns to hail."

The foſter-mother pauſes,
For Margaret's pale bright cheek
And her eyes' inquiring luſtre
Of the ſpirit's fervour ſpeak—

" But Ianthe! But my mother!
O tell me, nurſe, of her,
For a ſtrange new hope within me,
Doth at thy tidings ſtir!

" By the Sign of which thou ſpeakeſt,
Salome, doſt thou mean
The ſad and ſhameful token
That marks the Nazarene?"

"Yea! 'Twas His Croſs that ſign'd her,
That token of His love,
Who ſtoop'd, His glory veiling,
Our low eſtate to prove.

"In manhood's might He came not—
No earthly ſplendour crown'd,
But lowly in a manger,
A wondrous Babe was found.

"A Virgin-Mother bare Him,
As holy ſeers foretold,
And angels bade the ſhepherds
In Him their LORD behold.

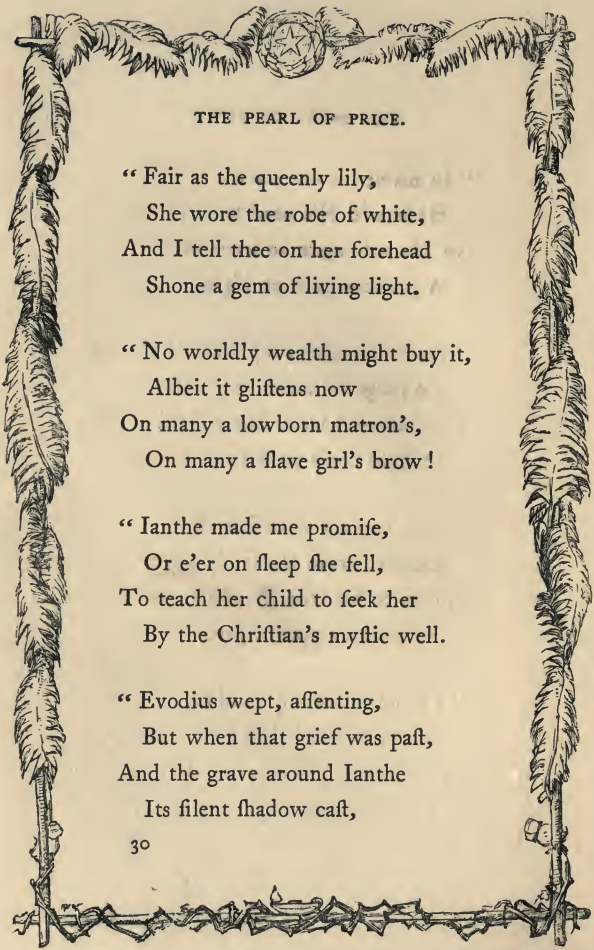
"In poverty abiding,
To man's eſtate He grew,
And deeds of bleſſing mark'd Him
The Holy and the True!

" In ſhame for our ſalvation
He bow'd His head to die,
Ere He roſe again to teach us
A glorious path on high.

" He comes again, my daughter,
To judge th' aſſembled world,
The banner'd Croſs His enſign,
In ſight of all unfurl'd.

" Such was the faith Ianthe
Learned from the lowly ſlave,
Whom to his wife, Evodius
A wedding preſent gave.

" I ſtood beſide thy mother,
When on her bright young head,
By the moonlit ſtream in Daphne,
The cleanſing drops were ſhed.



" Fair as the queenly lily,
She wore the robe of white,
And I tell thee on her forehead
Shone a gem of living light.

" No worldly wealth might buy it,
Albeit it gliſtens now
On many a lowborn matron's,
On many a ſlave girl's brow!

" Ianthe made me promiſe,
Or e'er on ſleep ſhe fell,
To teach her child to ſeek her
By the Chriſtian's myſtic well.

" Evodius wept, aſſenting,
But when that grief was paſt,
And the grave around Ianthe
Its ſilent ſhadow caſt,

" He bade thy nurſe remember
That no Prieſt of hated name
Should ever croſs his threſhold
To wed his child to ſhame;

" But few perchance the moments
I yet may ſpend with thee,
And thy mother's charge hath reſted
With a ſolemn weight on me."

" What ſayeſt thou, Salome?"
And pale with nameleſs fears,
The maiden gazeth on her
Through the thickly gathering tears.

" Sweet Lady, ſore it pains me,
At ſuch an hour as this,
To daſh away untaſted
Thy cup of earthly bliſs.

" I know Torquatus loves thee,
I know his lenient mood,
But another brings the edict
Which may not be withſtood.

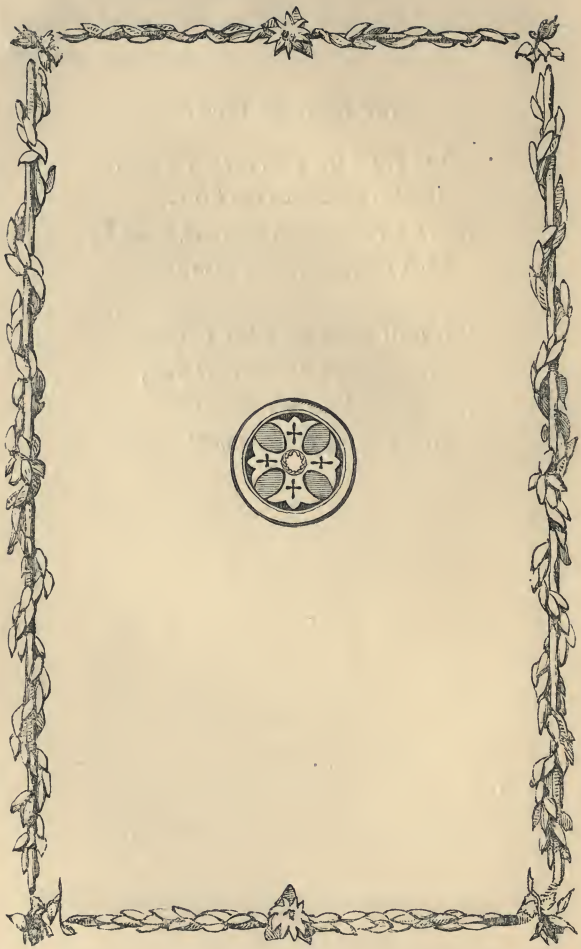
" To worſe than ſhame, my daughter,
To agony and death,
The Emperor dooms the Chriſtians
If rightly rumour ſaith.

" Yet by Ianthe's meſſage,
By a mother's pureſt love,
By the ſoftly brooding ſhadow
Of the Chriſtian's Holy Dove,

" By Him, Who to redeem us
Endured ſuch bitter woe,
For the Pearl of which I tell thee,
I bid thee all forego!

"And count the coſt, my lov'd one,
Though deadly be the ſtrife,
And the Pearl, when thou haſt found it,
Muſt be valued more than life:

"It ſhall gleam upon thy forehead
When earth's diadems are duſt,
And Ianthe hails her daughter
At the riſing of the Juſt!"



The Baptism.

BY a marble tomb in Daphne,
A band of Chriſtians meet,
And Salome is among them,
With the maiden Marguerite.

The daughter of Evodius
Hath learn'd with ſteadfaſt heart,
Deſpite of fear and danger,
To chooſe the better part.

The aged Prieſt is ready—
The water guſheth nigh,
And Margaret is baptizèd
'Neath the moonlit eaſtern ſky.

As once he bleſs'd Ianthe,
He bleſſeth now her child,
And bids her keep her garments
For the Bridal undefil'd.

"Peace be with thee, my daughter;
Be ſtrong, and fear thou not,
Although thy LORD ſhould call thee
To ſhare His martyrs' lot."

The holy rite is ended—
The gifts ſhe ſought are won;
The wondrous life eternal
Within her is begun;

And ſtill the maiden kneeleth
Her mother's tomb beſide,
In the marvel of the gladneſs
Of a heaven-accepted Bride.

Rapt in Divine communion,
With CHRIST and Saints at reſt,
She gazeth heavenward, folding
Her palms upon her breaſt.

The adoring joy within her,
Hath taught her lips a ſong,
And ſhe ſeemeth one already
Of the white-rob'd heavenly throng.

The dreams of earth have vaniſh'd,
The coſt is counted now,
And the Sign of our ſalvation
Gleams on the uprais'd brow.

A change hath paſs'd upon her,
But not as heretofore;
An unſeen world around her,
Its glory ſeems to pour.

The peace that paſſeth knowledge,
Is mantling with calm might;
She hath paſſéd out of darkneſs
Into everlaſting light.

Salome bendeth o'er her
With a more than mother's bliſs,
When firſt the boon is granted
Her babe's ſoft lips to kiſs.

By a Chriſtian ſponſor's travail
In faſting and in prayer,
For ever ſhall Salome
In Ianthe's gladneſs ſhare.

She hath led her cheriſh'd nurſling
To the fount of ſecond birth,
And a life Divine is granted
To the Chriſten'd child of earth.

But Salome ſtarts, for footſteps
Are ſounding in the glade,
"Flee, flee, my child!" ſhe whiſpers,
"For our meeting is betray'd."

It is too late—the moonlight
Reveals an armèd band;—
On the kneeling maiden reſteth
A mailèd ſoldier's hand.

"Whom have we here?" he crieth,
"By Jove, a queenly fair!"
"'Tis the daughter of Evodius,"
Saith his comrade, "ſo beware!

"Methinks our noble Prefect
Will not thank us for our deed,
And the capture of his chosen
May win a sorry meed."

"Ha, there! what is 't ye talk of?
Let not the women go!"
Exclaims their captain, Aper,
The Prefect's wily foe:

For ruthless is his nature,
And covetous of pelf,
And secretly he seeketh
The prefecture himself.

His own advancement shaping,
He blames the gentler mood
Which makes Torquatus tardy
To shed the Christians' blood;

" But late he brought from Cæſar
A notice to proceed,
Leſt his Prefect ſeem a favourer
Of the new and impious creed."

So inly he exulteth,
That Torquatus muſt decide
'Twixt the favour of the Emperor,
And his own betrothèd bride.

He bids them bind the Chriſtians,
And to the priſon bear,
Nor heeds for Lady Margaret,
Her foſter-mother's prayer.

Upon the morrow ſummon'd,
At the Prefect's bar to ſtand,
They lead them forth in fetters,
A ſmall, devoted band.

"And who is yonder captive,"
Aſks Torquatus, "rob'd in white?"
Struck with the queenly bearing
Of the lovely neophyte.

Strange change for timid maiden!
No dim miſgiving lies
In the calm repoſing brightneſs
Of thoſe cloudleſs heaven-lit eyes.

Her ſtep is firm and ſtately,
No crimſon dies her cheek,
Though ſhe wears the virgin beauty
Of a maiden pure and meek.

She ſtands before Torquatus—
He ſtarteth from his throne—
"*Thou*, Margaret! *Thou* a captive,
My beautiful! mine own!

" *Thou* knew'ſt not of the meeting
In Daphne yeſternight!
Thou couldſt not mean to join them
In their dark accurſéd rite!

" Nay, tell me 'twas an error,
And in the myrtle ſhade,
Thou didſt but think to wander
By moonlight with thy maid!

" What mean ye, guards, to charge her
With a Chriſtian's hated name?
Looſe ye the chains from off her,
Ye ſhall abye the blame!"

" Forbear! Forbear, O Prefect,
And hear mine anſwer firſt,
Then let thy ſoldiers looſe me,
Or let them do their worſt!

"That Holy Name, thou hateſt,
To me is dearer far
Than life itſelf, and therefore
I ſtand before thy bar.

"But yeſternight was given
The right to call it mine,
And not for all earth offers,
Would I that right reſign.

"I am a Chriſtian! Hear me!
Signed with my Saviour's Croſs,
I count as erſt I counted,
All other gain but loſs,

"Even thy love, Torquatus,
And earth had nought more dear"—
And the fetter'd hand is lifted
To daſh away a tear.

But now Evodius cometh;
With a father's anguiſh wild,
He calls upon Torquatus
To give him back his child.

"Reſtore, reſtore my daughter,
My blameleſs child!" he cries,
"She is no Chriſtian, Prefect,
But a ſpell upon her lies!

"A curſe on thee, Salome!
A father's curſe on thee,
For thou haſt wrought this evil
To tear my child from me!"

Hark, in his ears there ringeth
A daughter's bitter cry,
"My father! O my father!
Make it not hard to die!"

"Die? Die? What means my darling?
By the ſtrength of this right arm
The miſcreant ſhall periſh
Who toucheth thee for harm!

"Off, guards! off at your peril!"
And through their midſt he ſprings,
And her fetter'd arms the maiden
Around Evodius flings.

"Now by Ianthe's memory,
My father, curſe us not!"
She hath fainted on his boſom—
He weeps—ſhe knows it not—

They bear her to the dungeon,
Salome to the rack,
But the ſtrength to both is granted
To keep the bloodſtain'd track.

The Captive.

SALOME'S ſtriſe is ended—
In peace ſhe reſteth now,
A crown of fadeleſs glory
Laid up to grace her brow;

But the captive in the priſon
Hath torture to endure,
Though the bleeding heart recoil not,
And the Chriſom robe be pure.

Beſought, commanded, threaten'd,
With filial ſorrow wrung—
The words, "I am a Chriſtian,"
Are the lateſt on her tongue.

One while her father waters
With tears his daughter's feet,
Beſeeching her to ſpare him
His child, his Marguerite!

Anon he flings her from him
In the frenzy of deſpair,
And the doom that ſhe hath courted,
He ſternly bids her bear.

He hath left her, and ſhe murmurs,
"Death's bitterneſs is paſt!"
While in the dungeon's darkneſs
Her tears are raining faſt.

But a ray of lamp-light gleameth
Through the opening of the door,
And another comes—Torquatus!
To tempt her yet once more:

He ſets before the maiden
The infamy and ſcorn,
The death of lingering torture,
Unpitied to be borne;

Then fondly he contraſteth
The bliſs of earthly love,
And all his fancy painteth,
Her gentle heart to move;

And ſhe who erſt undaunted
Of ſhame and torture heard,
In the truth of woman's nature,
Thrills to a kindly word.

"Torquatus, I have lov'd thee
With a maiden's truſtful heart,
And ſuch alone can meaſure
The agony to part.

"Yea, e'en the martyr's triumph
Were dearer ſhared with thee;
And, one, if prayer may win it,
Our portion yet may be!

"But *now* I may not truſt thee
My heavenward ſteps to guide,
Or mine inmoſt heart were bounding
To be thy Chriſtian bride."—

"Then be my bride," he anſwers,
"And lightly I reſign
The prefecture, my Margaret,
To link my fate with thine!

" I aſk thee but to-morrow,
For ſome grains of incenſe flung
On the altar of Apollo,
To ſtill the ſlanderous tongue;

" And with thee and thy father,
I ſeek ſome far-off land,
Where henceforth as ſhe liſteth,
My Margaret ſhall command.

" I will not chide thee, darling,
For thy Chriſtian fancies there:
To a dead man, if it pleaſe thee,
Thou ſhalt make thy harmleſs
prayer."

" Not to the *dead*, Torquatus!
To One Who died, but lives,
And in long ſuffering mercy
Thine ignorance forgives!

" To One Whoſe love is dearer
Than aught of earth can be,
I cleave through ſhame and ſuffering,
And bow the willing knee!

" Nay, tempt me not, nor ſtay me,
With a blood-ſtain'd hand abhorred,
A ſtain whence nought can cleanſe thee,
Save the mercy of my LORD!

" Nor dream that on the morrow,
A traitor to the faith!
Thine idol gods I wòrſhip!"
With kindling eye ſhe ſaith.

" Ha! thou art daring, maiden,
Mine anger thus to brave;
Nor boots it further parley
A frantic fool to ſave.—

" And yet bethink thee, Margaret!
To worſe than death my will
May doom a maiden ſpurning
Counſel and threatening ſtill."—

" I fear thee not, Torquatus,
Nor aught that fleſh can do!
Ye cannot harm CHRIST's virgin,
Let but her heart be true!

" Leave me!—thou haſt mine anſwer,
And when again we meet,
Thy captive will not tremble
Before thy judgment-ſeat.—

" Yet when thy word hath doom'd her
To agony and ſhame,
In prayer to One thou know'ſt not,
Her lips ſhall breathe thy name!"

In darkneſs and in ſilence
The captive ſeems alone,
Yet a ſpeechleſs joy ſuſtains her,
In earth's brighteſt hour unknown.

Upon the floor ſhe ſlumbers,
With heavenly viſions bleſt,
But vainly ſtrives Torquatus
To calm himſelf for reſt.

Helpleſs in frenzy toſſing
At morn upon his bed,
He calls aloud for water
To lave his burning head.

Salome's death, he crieth,
Lies heavy at his heart,—
Anon he raves of Margaret,
With ſudden ſhivering ſtart.

"Slay not the maiden, Aper!"
He cries, while from his claſp
The rod of rule is paſſing
For another hand to graſp.

Martyrdom.

FLOOD of ſunlight ſtreameth
In Daphne on a tomb,
And in Antioch on a *Bridal*—
'Tis the Chriſtians' day of doom!

Yet ne'er for eaſtern nuptials,
In the ſaffron tunic dreſt,
Was a ſpouſe to match the fair one
In her white, baptiſmal veſt!

The iron fetters on her,
Might a bride's adorning ſeem,
While the ſunlight robes her beauty,
Like the glory of a dream.

"Thanks unto GOD," ſhe murmurs,
"Torquatus is not here,
And it ſpares a pang, my ſentence
From other lips to hear."

Sternly hath Aper queſtioned,
And ſteadfaſt her reply,
"In the Name of CHRIST I glory,
Nor will my LORD deny!"

She hath brav'd the torture, ſmiling
When a warm and crimſon flood
Dyes the ſnowy limbs, ſo lately
Waſhed in the atoning Blood!

Yet a pang her boſom rendeth
When her chidden fire is beat,
To ſtill his frantic wailing,
As he claſps her judge's feet.

To the wild beaſts in the circus
With the aged prieſt anon,
Relentleſs Aper dooms her,
Or e'er her crown be won.

They have loos'd a lion on her
As with outſtretch'd arms in prayer,
She lifteth up to heaven
A face unearthly fair;

And the monſter croucheth by her,
At that angel brow diſmayed,
And her ſtruggling fire exclaimeth,
"Now Christ hath been thine aid!"

He hath burſt from thoſe who held him—
He hath leap'd the wall below—
He ſtrains her to his boſom,
Nor fears the briſtling foe!

"Thy God be mine, my daughter!
Thy Saviour I adore,
And may His mercy link me
With thee for evermore!"

She hath wreath'd her arms around him,
And her thick and ſhadowy hair
Veils her brightneſs, as ſhe breatheth
A heaven-accepted prayer:—

"Now letteſt Thou Thy ſervants
Depart in peace, O Lord,
For our eyes have ſeen ſalvation,
According to Thy word."

The lion's paw hath fell'd them
Together to the ground,
And the mortal coil is ſever'd,
That to earth their ſpirits bound.

For the cries of ſcorn and hatred,
For the darkly ſcowling throng,
There are glorious forms around them,
And the Hallelujah ſong.

But the deed aſſign'd, accompliſh'd,
The lion watcheth now
O'er the twain ſo calmly ſleeping,
Heaven's ſignet on their brow:

And woe to thoſe who venture
With a rude and heathen hand,
To touch them, or to ſever
The death-cemented band!

Yet the aged Prieſt bends ſcatheleſs,
With reverent touch to cloſe
Eyes that have wept their lateſt,
For a ſtill and ſweet repoſe.

"Enough of blood, O Aper,"
The people cry, "to-day!
Thou wouldſt not rage more fiercely
Than yonder beaſt of prey!"

On the funeral bier together,
The ſire and child are laid,
And in Daphne, nigh Ianthe,
Their lowly couch is made.

A heavy laden ſinner
Steals in the moonlight there,
And a voice of bitter weeping
Is ſounding in the air.

But the chaſtened heart is training
To own the Crucified,
And the aged Prieſt is ready
To the Croſs of hope to guide.

Once more in Daphne's valley,
Orontes' moonlit wave
Supplies the myſtic fountain
A Chriſtian's brow to lave.

And Torquatus kneels in calmneſs
Upon the graſſy ſod,
And aſks for ſtrength to follow
His lov'd one unto God!

It will eaſily be perceived that I have by no means followed very cloſely the ſcanty legend of S. Margaret, who is ſaid to have ended her martyrdom by the ſword. Such a tale, however, as I have ſought to verſify, is to be found in the annals of many a virgin martyr, whoſe bright example may well reprove the ſlowneſs of our faith, the

dreamineſs of our hope, and the coldneſs of our love. And yet the Martyrs *wait* for their reward, and yet the word unto them is "that they ſhould *reſt yet* for a little ſeaſon, *until* their fellow ſervants alſo and their brethren, that ſhould be killed as they were, ſhould be fulfilled." And is there not a ſtartling ſignificance in the newly awakened and increaſing intereſt in all that relates to Apoſtles, Saints, and Martyrs, to which the many publications on the ſubject bear abundant teſtimony?

Does it not remind one of a time at the cloſe of the Jewiſh diſpenſation, when men betook themſelves to build and beautify the ſepulchres of the Prophets, honouring as dead thoſe whom as living, they could not abide? And does not that word of warning unto them, concern us alſo, "Therefore alſo ſaid the Wiſdom of God, I will ſend them Prophets and Apoſtles, and ſome of them they ſhall ſlay and perſecute." (S. Luke xi. 47—51.)

Let us not forget that it is *one* thing to cheriſh the legends of the paſt, and to dwell upon "an olden tale," and it is *another* to welcome the ſtern reality when it comes home to us, not as pourtrayed by the painter's or the poet's fancy, but as the voice of the Croſs Bearer ſaying unto each, "Follow Me."

Greenwich,
The Feaſt of the Circumciſion, 1850.

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